

# Recent Foreign Books on the Graphic Arts, Bibliography, and Library Science

By LAWRENCE S. THOMPSON

## DECIPHERMENT OF ANCIENT SCRIPTS

Ernst Doblhofer's *Zeichen und Wunder; die Entzifferung verschollener Schriften und Sprachen* (Vienna: Paul Neff Verlag, 1957) is the history of the decipherment of ancient scripts; and it ranges from the Rosetta Stone to the yet undeciphered Etruscan, Indus, and Easter Island inscriptions. Well illustrated and fully documented with references to the basic monographs and articles in scholarly journals, Doblhofer's text is nevertheless in a light, almost journalistic style. He deals not only with the language of peoples who developed a high level of culture, but also with the languages and scripts of more primitive civilizations. As a text for courses in the history of books and writing, *Zeichen und Wunder* deserves a high place on the reading lists. At the same time, however, the rapid advances being made in many fields covered by this book suggest the need for frequent revision of this book.

## HISTORY OF WRITING

The definitive general work on the history of writing is Marcel Cohen's *La grande invention de l'écriture et son évolution* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1958; 3 v.). The first volume is the text proper, the second the notes, bibliography, and index, and the third a carefully selected portfolio of plates. The authority of the author, one of the half dozen greatest living linguists, is beyond question. He has spent over twenty years on the project, and the final product reflects a full maturity of scholarship.

This work is a logical complement to Cohen's famous joint work with Alphonse Meillet, *Les langues du monde* (2d ed., 1952), and it has the same broad and comprehensive coverage. Cohen traces the origins of writing, using the most recent scholarship, and he covers all recorded written languages and their peculiar vehicles. The portfolio of

---

*Dr. Thompson is Director of Libraries, University of Kentucky.*

---

plates is exceptionally well produced and can be used effectively for display or as a teaching aid as well as for reference. *La grande invention de l'écriture* and *Les langues du monde* are indispensable for all reference collections.

## GERMAN MANUSCRIPTS

The late Albert Boeckler's *Deutsche Buchmalerei vorgotischer Zeit* (Königstein im Taunus: Karl Robert Langewiesche, 1959) and his *Deutsche Buchmalerei der Gotik* (Königstein im Taunus: Karl Robert Langewiesche, 1959) are now available either separately (as Langewiesche's "Blaue Bücher") at DM 5.40 each or in a single volume under one cover for DM 12.80. These extraordinarily handsome books are accompanied by short texts that are simple, direct, and comprehensive in spite of their brevity. Boeckler was an acknowledged master in the field, and these two little books are an adequate introduction to the history of illumination in the Germanies during the Middle Ages. Boeckler's introductory essays give us a broad picture of the intellectual and social background for the manuscript luxury book, and at the same time there is proper attention to techniques and factual detail.

## MANUSCRIPTS OF THE BIBLIA PAUPERUM

When the very, very occasional manuscript or even more occasional xylographic Biblia Pauperum turns up at auction, one can only watch for the sale price and wonder why these *rarissima* are not called *biblia picta* or *biblia parabolica*. Indeed, even in the late Middle Ages this designation would probably have been considerably more accurate.

Henrik Cornell's *Biblia Pauperum* (Stock-

holm, 1925) is and will remain a basic work in this field, but a great deal of other significant research on the subject has come out in the last quarter of a century. Gerhard Schmidt's *Die Armenbibel des XIV. Jahrhunderts* (Graz and Cologne: Bohlau, 1959) uses this material and combines it with his own extensive, often ingenious research to produce the definitive study of the *Biblia Pauperum*. He reconstructs the lost original, which was created in Bavaria or Austria around the middle of the thirteenth century, and he traces carefully the changes in various textual lines during the next hundred years. In this analysis it is very clear that an emotional, subjective tradition of religion existed on a level of mediaeval society that was far removed from the learned clerks and their objective, highly systematized theological speculation.

The forty-four plates from some twenty manuscripts show a rich variety of examples of south German book painting in the fourteenth century. There are sophisticated, often inspired drawings in some of the manuscripts, the scribblings of idle monks in others. In both we can see (especially with the help of Schmidt's analysis) the bases of Gothic art. For art historians, for general mediaevalists, and for students of the history of the book Schmidt's work is a cornerstone of their literature.

#### MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE BOOK ART

*Buchkunst und Bibliophilie in Spätgotik und Renaissance* (Munich: Karl Zink Verlag, 1959) is a handsome catalog of an exhibit by the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in honor of the First International Congress of Bibliophiles and the sixtieth annual conference of the Gesellschaft der Bibliophilen in 1959. There are 213 entries with very brief annotations; and there are a half dozen carefully chosen illustrations, including one in color of a miniature from the vellum copy of the *Decretum Gratiani* (Mainz: Peter Schöffer, 1472). The treasures of the Bavarian State Library are sufficient for a thousand such exhibits, but this one is tastefully chosen and edited, just sufficient to make any bibliophile yearn to spend the rest of his days in Munich. A small group of a dozen and a half modern illustrated books in editions for bibliophiles was also exhibited.

#### JAGIELLONIAN TREASURES

Zofia Ameisenowa's *Rekopisy i pierwotne ruki iluminowane Bibliotek Jagiellońskich* (Wrocław and Krakow: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich, 1958) is a handsome and highly detailed catalog of illuminated manuscripts and illustrated incunabula in the University of Krakow's Jagiellonian Library. In all there are 215 manuscripts and printed books, all described minutely, with special reference to the illustration and ornamentation. The largest number of entries is for Italy. The other sections are devoted to France, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and fragments. There is an extensive bibliography, and several indexes make the work quite easy to use. Most important, perhaps, are the 256 illustrations in the section of plates and the eight handsome colored plates in the text. The book is a monument both of Polish bibliographical scholarship and of book production.

#### MANUSCRIPTS IN FERMO

Serafino Prete's *I Codici della Biblioteca comunale di Fermo* ("Biblioteca de bibliografia italiana," XXXV; Florence: Olschki, 1960) is a comprehensive catalog of 122 manuscripts in the library of Fermo. A partial list appeared earlier in *Studia Picena* in 1954-57. The library was founded in 1688, and it has had a long history of worthwhile service to scholarship, especially under the administration of Filippo Raffaelli from 1872 to 1893. The manuscript collection itself is rather miscellaneous in content, including classical texts, liturgical and theological works, some rather interesting medical texts, legal works, a herbal and lapidary, a seventeenth-century nautical chart, and so on through the customary list of subjects found in late mediaeval manuscripts. Most of the manuscripts date from the tenth to the fifteenth century. The texts of many of the manuscripts are of greatest importance for the palaeographical history of the individual titles, and Professor Prete's careful descriptions, including bibliographical references, will earn him the gratitude of scholars in many fields. There is a general index and an index of *incipits*.

#### EARLY TRANSYLVANIA PRINTING

Veturia Jugăreanu's *Bibliographie der siebenburgischen Frühdrucke* ("Bibliotheca bibliographica aureliana," I; Baden-Baden:

Verlag Heitz, 1959) is an alphabetical checklist of 380 sixteenth-century imprints from Transylvania (mainly Kronstadt, Klausenburg, Hermannstadt, and Karlsburg). Printing was introduced to Transylvania by the Kronstadt humanist and reformer Johannes Honterus (1498-1549), and the craft thrived vigorously in the main centers. The twenty-nine facsimiles in the bibliography indicate a highly developed state of the black art among the Siebenbürgen Swabians of the Reformation period. There is a list of sources, a list of libraries for which locations are given, and indexes of Cyrillic books, illustrations, languages, and localities (with a chronological list under each). An introductory note on the library of the Brukenthal Museum in Hermannstadt contains an interesting bit of Eastern European library history. This library has what is probably the largest existing collection of Transylvania imprints.

#### RUSSIAN PROTOTYPOGRAPHY

*Y istokov russkogo Knigopechataniia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSR, 1959), edited by M. N. Tikhomirov, A. A. Sidorov, and A. N. Nazarov, is a handsome and significant work on Russian printing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There are chapters on the beginning of printing in Russia, physical characteristics of the earliest imprints, early Cyrillic printing in other parts of Russia, Ukraine, and Roumania, ornaments, and other related matters. Problems of descriptive and historical bibliography are skillfully handled in the light of the technical aspects of composition, presswork, and paper. There are numerous facsimiles, all well reproduced. There is a useful short bibliography on Russian prototypography at the end of the book, but unfortunately there is no index. As an introduction to Slavic historical bibliography, the work of Tikhomirov and his colleagues is the best available book, and it should be in every collection of books on early European printing and historical bibliography.

#### HISTORY OF PRINTING

H. Steinberg's *Five Hundred Years of Printing* (1955) has appeared in a German translation by Jakob Hässlin under the title of *Die schwarze Kunst: 500 Jahre Buchdruck*

(Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1958). Like other Prestel books, this little volume is so well produced and the facsimiles are so sharp that the translation deserves a place on the shelf even of a library owning the original. Steinberg's narrative moves swiftly, and he is judicious in the choice of high spots in the history of the craft. The bibliography in this edition has been brought up to date, and a few minor adjustments made in the text.

An incidental but not totally irrelevant value of books of which there are editions both in English and in French or German is for graduate students who are preparing for a reading knowledge examination. The undergraduate training of many of them is so poor that intelligent use of a "pony" may often be helpful.

#### BOOK HISTORY

The *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* appears irregularly under the editorship of Bertold Hack and Bernhard Wendt and, fortunately, allows the inclusion of longer essays than most learned journals accept. In Fascicles 7-9 of vol. II (1960) Heinrich Grimm has a long study of "Die deutschen 'Teufelsbücher' des 16. Jahrhunderts: ihre Rolle im Buchwesen und ihre Bedeutung." This interesting genre had an important roll in the book trade of the Reformation era, and Grimm brings out their significance within the whole framework of the religious, social, political, and economic conditions of the age. These fascicles of the *Archiv* (delivered under one cover) also contain thirteen other shorter studies.

#### ROCCO ILLUSTRATION

Joachim Wieder's new edition of Wilhelm Hausenstein's *Rokoko: französische und deutsche Illustratören des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: R. Piper, 1958) is a welcome addition to the lists of books in print. Hausenstein's account of eighteenth-century book illustration in Germany and France is a penetrating study of the whole era; for the fine nuances of artistic creation are perhaps the best vehicles for describing the *galanterie* of the salons, radiant melancholy, heroic scenes, and endless variations of erotic rendezvous, all so typical of the fashionable book of the eighteenth century and the culture behind



it. The careers of the artists from poverty to prosperity (or, too often, poverty back to poverty) and the rôles of the patrons are among the most characteristic and the most revealing aspects of society in the moribund *ancien régime*. Hausenstein's book is heavily loaded with factual data, but his narrative moves rapidly. There is an index of artists and a short but concise bibliographical essay adequate for the purpose. *Rokoko* is a work that is a "must" on the reading lists for all courses in the history of the book, not to mention general studies in eighteenth-century European history.

#### OTTO DORFNER

Wolfgang Eckardt's *Otto Dorfner* (Stuttgart: Max Hettler Verlag, 1960) describes the life and work of one of the greatest bookbinders and teachers of binding in the twentieth century. When Professor Dorfner died in Weimar at the age of seventy in 1955, he left one of the great traditions of German art binding. He had received nearly every professional honor in his field, had served effectively as director of the Thuringian Crafts School in Weimar, and had personally created some of the most remarkable original designs of bindings to be found in twentieth-century Germany. Eckhardt's narrative is primarily biographical, but there are many worthwhile glimpses into the well-springs of Dorfner's genius. The thirty-two plates are halftones printed letterpress, and they bring out the details of Dorfner's craftsmanship effectively.

#### DANISH BOOK PRODUCTION

The superior quality of Danish books suggests, *inter alia*, the existence of superior training facilities in the book production industry and of good textbooks. One such manual which has received insufficient attention abroad is Otto Andersen's *Boghaandvaerket: Bogtryk, Papir, Reproduktion, Bogbind* (3d ed.; Copenhagen: Boghandlerfagskolen, 1954). The author, a Copenhagen publisher and bookseller, covers the various processes of composition and presswork, paper, pictorial reproduction, binding (hand and machine), design, the development of types, technical terms (arranged logically by process but fully indexed), samples of printing types commonly used in Denmark, and a bibliography. The illustrations, carefully

chosen and well reproduced, will justify the presence of the book in a collection where Danish is not widely understood by readers, and the collection of technical terms with definitions has a substantial reference value.

Charles Moegreen's *Laerebog i Typografi* (Copenhagen: Fagskolen for Boghaandvaerk, 1958) is a comprehensive and compact textbook in all aspects of typography. Richly illustrated and with an index containing some six hundred terms, Moegreen's book is lucid, authoritative, and well organized, and a quarter of a century of experience as a teacher undergirds the entire work. Although the book was written with special attention to the needs of students, it may also be used for reference. We have no comparable work in English with so many detailed illustrations, and the text is also considerably more extensive than anything we have in any single volume. The bibliography, a select but adequate list of about seventy titles on typographical practice, reveals clearly the relative volume and quality of the literature in various languages. In English-speaking countries we must depend heavily on works such as Moegreen's and comparable books in German and Swedish.

#### TUSCAN SERIALS

Clementina Rotondi's *Bibliografia dei periodici toscani (1852-1864)* ("Biblioteca di bibliografia italiana," XXXVI; Florence: Olschki, 1960) is an analytical list of 207 serials published in Tuscany, mainly in Florence, during a critical period of Italian history. All types of serials are included, regardless of periodicity, content, or importance. For each title there is information on the complete history of the printing, the period covered, editors, a historical and descriptive note, bibliographical references, and location of copies. The arrangement is chronological, and there is an alphabetical index of titles and another index of persons. Miss Rotondi's work is a key to Italian history of the period just prior to national unification, but it is also a basic contribution to the history of Italian journalism. Comparable works for other periods and other jurisdictions would do well to follow this model.

#### THE VERTICAL FILE

Werner Liebich's *Anwendungsmöglichkeiten der Vertikalablage* ("Arbeiten aus dem

Bibliothekar-Lehrinstitut des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen," 18; Cologne: Greven Verlag, 1959) is a definitive study of the vertical file. Liebich examines the history, the physical forms, inclusion of materials, and administration of the vertical file, and he provides an exhaustive bibliography. His treatment is tempered with common sense, but at the same time he shows much imagination about the potential of the vertical file in all types of libraries and library situations. There is a section of illustrations showing various types of vertical file equipment. Reference librarians in this country as well as in Europe will find that this work will be a useful addition to their desk-top reference set.

#### THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE

Julien Cain's *Les Transformations de la Bibliothèque Nationale de 1936 à 1959* (Paris, 1959) is a handsomely illustrated brochure of seventy-four pages showing the physical changes in the French national library during the past quarter of a century. The spatial problems of the Bibliothèque Nationale were probably the most aggravated of any of the great national libraries, but M. Cain and his colleagues have attacked them with vigor and imagination. Many of their solutions are suggestive for research libraries of all types and in different countries of the world. There is a subject index and a topographical index to the various parts of the library.

#### ITALIAN LIBRARIES

*La ricostruzione delle biblioteche italiane dopo la guerra 1950-55* (Rome: Direzione Generale delle Accademie e Biblioteche,

Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 1955; 2 v.) reveals considerably greater damage to Italian libraries than was generally suspected in this country. Divided by regions, each Italian library of any significance is described briefly, and, when possible, the exact extent of the damage caused by military action is noted. The second volume is organized on parallel lines and gives detailed accounts of reconstruction. Both volumes are richly illustrated. As a prime source of twentieth-century library history, these two volumes deserve careful study, for they provide considerable insight into the present status of Italian libraries. The vigor and imagination applied to the problem of reconstruction is a partial indication of the Italians' appreciation of their great libraries as a national resource.

The second edition of the *Annuario delle biblioteche italiane* (Rome: Direzione Generale delle Accademie e Biblioteche, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 1959; 3v.) reveals a healthy library situation in Italy, at least as far as the organization, housing, and availability of the collections are concerned. The first two volumes cover, in alphabetical order, the libraries outside of Rome; and the third covers Rome, Vatican City, and San Marino. History, holdings, special collections, and catalogs are noted, and there is a list of references to literature about the library, when such exist. At the end of each volume there is an extensive collection of photographs of the libraries in the volume in question. The *Annuario* is one of those contributions to library literature which can be read with pleasure and also serve as a key reference book.

## BOOKS ARE FOR READING

"Books Are for Reading," a speech by Paul Bixler at the Burma-American Institute, Rangoon, Burma, has been printed as a pamphlet. The ACRL office will fill requests for copies as long as its limited supply lasts. Mr. Bixler has been on leave from Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio, since the summer of 1958 as Library Adviser to the Social Science Library of the University of Rangoon. He returns to Antioch this month.